

Advice for people with mental health issues

This factsheet is for people with mental health problems or their carers, who need housing advice.

This factsheet is for you, if you have had difficulties with your mental health, and you may have lost or could lose your home.

Housing needs and hospital discharge

Councils in Kent & Medway have signed up to a 'Joint Protocol' with the health authority. This can be found at <http://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/assets/uploads/2016/05/MHhospitaldischargeprotocol05v2.doc>. This agreement aims to ensure that people leaving a mental health in-patient facility have their housing needs properly addressed, through partnership working. Everyone who has been admitted to a mental health in-patient facility will be discharged with a care plan outlining their support needs and how these will be met. You may be referred to specialist Supported Housing for a period of recovery. Here you will be given some support to prepare yourself for living independently again. There are usually arrangements to help you move on from supported accommodation when you are ready.

Making a homeless application

If supported housing is not appropriate for you, and you have no accommodation that you will have a right to return to (or cannot safely return to) on your discharge from hospital, you can make a homeless application to the local council.

From October 2018, hospitals will be required to refer people to the local council, if they believe they are threatened with homelessness – provided the patient gives consent. If you apply to the council within 56 days of your expected discharge (or you agree to the hospital referring you), the council has a duty to assess your housing needs and draw up a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP). The PHP will list the reasonable steps that both you and the council must take, in order to help you resolve your housing problem. If you have a support worker, you can give permission for your support worker to be involved in discussing this plan. The earlier this plan is agreed and put in practice, the better – as this will give more opportunity for all avenues to be explored.

On discharge from hospital, if you still have nowhere to go and there is a reason to believe you are in priority need, you will be provided with temporary accommodation. The council may have a reason to believe you are in priority need as a result of your stay in hospital. They will consider whether you are more vulnerable than an ordinary person taking into account any physical or mental ill-health, drug or alcohol dependency, and what support is available to you to deal with these issues.

If the council cannot establish a local connection with their area, you may be referred to another local authority with which you do have a connection. You would normally have a local connection if:

- You have lived in the area for some time in the past, through your own choice;
- You work in the area;
- You have close family relations in the area;
- You cannot return to any other area where you have a connection, because of violence;
- There are other special reasons why you have a local connection, which the council accepts as valid;
- You do not have any local connection with any area in the UK.

Spending time in hospital within a local authority area will not give you a local connection to that area, so it is best to apply to the council area where you had your last settled home, or other local connection.

If, despite following all the reasonable steps that are in your PHP, you cannot find somewhere to live within 56 days of becoming homeless, the council will go on to consider whether they owe a duty to offer more permanent accommodation to you. This duty will be owed if the council decides you are in priority need, and you are not homeless as a direct result of something you have deliberately done. The council and the Mental Health Team will jointly agree on the most suitable accommodation for you.

Support as part of your Personalised Housing Plan

If you have applied as a homeless person, the assessment the council carries out will evaluate your on-going support needs, and ensure they are being met. Council officers may make referrals to other agencies with specialist skills and knowledge, or suggest you contact them yourself.

If you have never been in hospital, are not homeless yet but have mental health difficulties that affect your ability to hold on to a tenancy, the council may be able to refer you to relevant help.

For an indication of some of the support services that may be available to you, go to <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/>.

Contacting your local Council

Ashford: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk>
Canterbury: <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk>
Dartford: <https://www.dartford.gov.uk>
Dover: <https://www.dover.gov.uk>
Gravesham: <http://www.gravesham.gov.uk>
Maidstone: <https://self.maidstone.gov.uk>
Medway: <https://www.medway.gov.uk>
Sevenoaks: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk>
Folkestone & Hythe: <https://www.shepway.gov.uk>
Swale: <https://www.swale.gov.uk>
Thanet: <https://www.thanet.gov.uk>
Tunbridge Wells: <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk>
Tonbridge & Malling: <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk>